AN

ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

NORFOLK AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY,

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BY

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ADDRESS.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is presumed theoretically, although not invariably carried out in practice, that a teacher understands the doctrine he attempts to inculcate; and the supposition may so far be useful, as to conceal many of his deficiencies when his audience knows as little as himself. But to speak of a science of which every hearer is a professor, to attempt a solution of mysteries in a society of adepts, to talk of military manœuvres to a regiment of veterans, to lecture on tuition to a convocation of schoolmasters, or to dwell on the power and beauty of art in the presence of cunning skill and practised criticism, requires either a consciousness of knowledge or a frank confession of inability. I take shelter under the latter, and, prudently avoiding practical details, shall leave the duty of instruction to others better qualified than myself.

We live in an age of improvement. The characteristic battle cry of our times is, *onward*. Not shouted by armed columns, in the headlong onset that secures or overthrows empires, but in the scarcely less impetuous advance of all classes, of all nations, in the eventful struggle for precedence in the arts of peace.

In looking back within the period of our own remembrance, there seems so much of progress crowded into that brief space, that we are surprised so little should

have been done before we lived. We wonder what the world has been about since the creation, and suspect that the past ages must have had rather a sleepy time in leaving so much to our day and generation. In the vast range of science, and its applicability to every day use, in the means of abridging distance by increased locomotion, in all that relates to human culture and human comfort, the nineteenth century has done more than the combined results of all its predecessors. Its distinctive mark is utility. All professions and classes must contribute to this great end. The plodding scholar and the practical man must alike lay their work on the public altar. The student is not allowed to follow his tastes and gratify his curiosity for himself alone. He must acquire for others and surrender his knowledge for the good of all. He may dissect the globe until its component parts are familiar things, resolve matter into its original elements, compel the solid rock to tell the history of its formation, and from the indistinct and mouldering fragments of a by-gone time, spread out the map of the infant earth teeming with monster life and unseemly vegetation. He may show how processes, worked out by the wisdom of the Creator, compelled the ungenial soil to unfold the principles of production, and transforming the primitive world into fertility and usefulness, prepared this beautiful home for the advent and improvement of the human race. But he must do all this with a strict regard to the wants of humanity. Science can no longer dwell in seclusion, a living thing buried from men, but she is summoned from study and laboratory, from closet and cabinet, to aid in the great march of advancement. She abandons her "arcana" to minister to man, and to apply her power to the necessities of active life. She does not, now, bend mysteriously over furnace and crucible, that iron may become gold and our allotted days

be indefinitely extended, but she brings her works into light, that industry may be encouraged by her friendly assistance. She seeks a solvent that shall cover the barren places with abundance, converting stones to bread and transmuting sterility into waving cornfields. That the husbandman may know how to apportion his labor, she subjects the soil to a scrutiny, which infallibly betrays where excess exists or where nutriment is wanted. She classifies and arranges earth, stone and plant, with unerring skill, tells the history and uses of the forest tree, breaks in on the domestic economy of insect life, discloses the habits of the worm, gives every hue of the beetle's mail, describing, so minutely, the appearance and intentions of the destroyer of orchard and garden, that his presence may be detected and his operations frustrated. Indeed, the speculations of science and abstractions of philosophy are made subservient to this utilitarian age, which discards theory without practice and estimates the value of learned research in proportion to its adaptation to the tangible requirements of society.

It is not advisable to go back to the early ages, tracing the progress of agriculture from beyond the flood. It may be taken for granted that the antediluvians entertained a due consideration for dinner, and very well comprehended the small chances of procuring it without paying their addresses to the soil. Neither is it expedient to explore what is generally understood by antiquity. It may be a matter of curiosity what the people of that indefinite period did to the earth, but, as for any practical application of the information, we might as well consult a model of one of their war galleys for the purpose of improving a line of battle ship. Whether tillage was first practised in India or China, whether the Egyptians pulverized the Delta of the Nile with a wooden hoe, or

the Romans scarified the Campagna with a crooked stick, are matters of no great moment except to the antiquary. A thorough investigation into the agriculture of the ancients would give no hint for the management of our farms, adding neither to the corn bin, hay mow, or market cart. They wrote much, and, not content with plain prose, gave some, now useless, advice in very excellent verse. Hesiod's poem of "Works and Days" sleeps on the shelf of the library, and the "Georgics" of Virgil serve only to worry schoolboys with rather tough Latin. Homer says, that the master farmer was accustomed to meet his ploughmen at either end of the furrow with the "crowned goblet," to reward and stimulate them with hearty draughts. He does not describe the quality of the beverage, but it is to be supposed that it was such as would meet the approbation of a temperance society, or that the furrows were very long ; the employers of those days doubtless being as anxious as at the present for a good day's work, and however partial they may have been to "the serpentine line of beauty" in art, it can be presumed they did not fancy an irregular series of them in their ploughed fields.

We give the past ages credit for very good intentions, and, in some things, must acknowledge their superiority. The huge monuments, whose construction is an unsolved problem, puzzling the science and art of modern times even to raise from the ground the fragments which time or the barbarian has laid low, compel us to confess that they beat us in laying stone wall. But, in positive usefulness, we entertain a belief that we have made an advance in the management of the earth. If the Carthagenian General, who wrote twenty-eight books on Husbandry, every word of which is now as little known as his military exploits, were present at the exhibition of to-day, his astonishment would be equal to that of his

soldiers, should they rise up, to find themselves confronted by a battery of flying artillery. And could Cincinnatus walk through our agricultural warehouses, his wonder would be, not that he left his plough, but that he ever returned to it. In fact, we flatter ourselves that we know something more about farming than did the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans; and doubt whether the most indefatigable research into their modes of cultivation would increase our knowledge, or induce an imitation of their implements and the manner in which they used them. We respect them for their veneration of the plough, and can excuse them for worshipping the ox that drew it, he being, unquestionably, superior to the average of their deities; but we think we could show them an article calculated to increase their bump of reverence, and stock that would essentially diminish the divine honors of all the cattle of antiquity, from Apis downward.

The cultivation of the earth commenced whenever, and wherever, she did not, spontaneously, produce enough for human wants. Necessity placed the hand on the plough, for men never yet did hard work for the fun of it. When they can feed and clothe themselves without it, they find other modes of amusement. Labor has been ordained as man's heritage, leaving to his ingenuity to discover the best ways of applying or diminishing it. One of his great objects is to produce the most results with the least work. He has, therefore, pressed the horse and ox into his service, making them do his bidding. He dams the water course, and only suffers it to run after it has turned his mill wheels. He invents the steam engine, and it puffs and blows that his hands may rest and his own breath not be expended. The drowsy hum of the old-fashioned spinning-wheel, which was once seen in every farm house, and the monotonous

sound of the hand-loom, that lumbered up the largest apartment, have given way to the stunning din and clatter of the factory, which turns out material enough to clothe an army, in the time that an ancient housewife would have been getting ready to weave a shirt.

Nor are labor-saving machines entirely wanting to the farmer. He can sow his drilled field, rake his hay and cut it up, reap, thrash, and winnow his grain, slice his vegetables, and do many other things by machinery. Steam ploughs have been invented, and may succeed where the high cultivation of centuries has removed obstructions to their smooth course, but in some of our land a steam man might be required at the handle. There are, also, instruments for mowing grass, which move dexterously over an even lawn, but would be somewhat discomposed by the irregularities of most of our hay fields. The farm has not, however, received that help its importance demands, and it is to be hoped that inventive genius will yet materially lessen the expenditure of manual labor.

Although Agriculture was the first regular occupation of the human race, and has, without interval or cessation, employed a large portion of it, giving the highest civilization in proportion to its progress and perfection, and raising to power and opulence the people who most assiduously pursued it, yet it has not made that advance which might have been expected, even in those countries usually quoted as evidences of the most successful cultivation.

It has been customary to speak of China, as the most extraordinary instance of elaborate and economical culture ; and it is so, to a certain extent. Nothing can surpass the indefatigable perseverance and industry of the Chinese husbandman. He omits nothing and he wastes nothing. He collects every thing that can increase the

productiveness of the soil, and applies it with the utmost care and attention. His crops are the only things seen on his land; a useless plant is a horror to him, and the growth of dock and pigweed, often mingled with our corn and potatoes, would put him into convulsions. His farm and his garden are one and the same thing. He considers Agriculture and Horticulture synonymous terms, it being as difficult for him as for us, to define where the one ends and the other begins. He tills his land as his father tilled it before him; he knows that certain applications produce certain results, and that is all he does know. He takes no farmer's periodical, to bother him with novel notions; has no new implement forced upon his notice; is ignorant of any other stock than the unwieldy animal that wallows before his wooden plough; belongs to no Agricultural Society; has never heard of a Cattle-Show; and his patience is not subjected to the ordeal of hearing an Annual Address.

Centuries ago, the same looking man could have been found, working on the same field, with the same clumsy utensils; and, in all probability, he will be found there ages hence, with unaltered garb, without change of accompaniment, and with precisely the same amount of skill and information.

There are sometimes impediments to making acquaintance with the minutiæ of Chinese husbandry. The foreign investigator is liable to interruptions, which entitle the inhabitants to more credit for conservatism than courtesy, they occasionally evincing a disposition to supply him with more specimens of the mineralogy of the country than he has leisure or inclination to examine. They have little partiality for the "white devil," whose presence drives the affrighted buffalo over the rice-fields, and the frantic women and children screaming through the villages.

Though high cultivation is peculiar to parts of China, there are extensive tracts yet unproductive. The agricultural resources of the land are not fully developed, and, it is supposed, might be made to sustain even her overestimated population.

We look to England, France, Belgium, Italy, for that progress which is worthy of imitation. There is much to be learned from all of them, and the adaptation of crops to soils, regularity, order, and neatness, shame our more slovenly management. In some respects they seem to have attained perfection, and yet they are continually making advances. In Great Britain, especially, there has been, for the last two hundred years, an amazing improvement. There, the wealthy, intelligent, and influential, devote themselves to the earth ; not for mere purposes of display, in the exhibition of their magnificent domains, but from a generous feeling for a pursuit which they both love and understand. Fondness for rural life is a strong characteristic of that country. It pervades all classes of society, is instilled into them from infancy by all the influences around them, is encouraged by the story books of childhood, and deepened into more intense devotion by the genius of romance and the inspiration of poetry. It may be traced to every region of the globe. Wherever the Briton plants himself, whether in the temperate zone, or under the burning sun of the distant East, he carries with him the taste which has clothed his native land with beauty. If climate will not conform to his wishes and give him the productions of his well-remembered home, he carves out a space from the forest or the jungle, domesticates the wild flower and trails the strange creeper of the wilderness about his new-made dwelling. Nor has his Government been satisfied in patronizing the most useful of the arts within the limits of its own juris-

diction only. The early navigators, who, under its direction, first ploughed the waves of the Pacific, took with them the germs of a vegetation which covers the islands of that now frequented ocean, and gives to the mariners of all nations renewed health and refreshment. Its expeditions have interchanged the productions of different climes, equalizing the fruits of the earth, and scattering variety and plenty. Even by the icebergs of the Northern pole, have its providence and watchfulness been extended. Wherever, in those scenes of desolation, a bare spot shows itself, for a brief space, amid the eternal snows, the reluctant sun warms into doubtful life the seeds which have been left by friendly hands, that succeeding wanderers may be cheered by these kindly tokens of sympathy.

Great as has been the progress of Agriculture in England, it has not reached that point of culmination from which every movement is descending. There seems yet much to be done. A distinguished writer* of that country says, "the single alteration of substituting the kitchen garden husbandry of Flanders in our plains, and the terraced culture of Tuscany in our hills, for the present system of Agricultural management, would at once double the produce of the British islands, and procure ample subsistence for twice the number of their present inhabitants." And another† states, that "at least three-fourths of the whole arable land in the country is under very indifferent culture."

What is said of England, equally applies to the other highly cultivated countries of Europe, it being conceded that there is no one whose productiveness might not be increased to the necessities of its population. Yet, worn-out

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* Alison's Principles of Population.

† James Smith.

civilization broods, despondingly, over the apparently exhausted elements of fertility, and covering the seas with the superabundance of the old world, extends an unbroken line of emigration towards the setting sun. It comes to spread itself over this new land of promise. It comes, with the antiquated usages of past generations, to renew, on a virgin soil, the hopes which have withered in ceaseless and unrequited labor. It comes to demand, from the reclaimed earth, food and raiment and shelter; to seek comfort, independence, protection; to trust to an unknown land for the peace and subsistence denied in the much-loved places of its nativity. It comes to clear the forest, drain the morass, open the dark dank face of nature to the breath and light of heaven. It comes, with limbs accustomed to delve and burrow, to do the rough work of this young country—to build her cities—to construct her railroads and aqueducts—to level her hills, fill her valleys, tunnel her mountains, span her rivers. It comes to unfold the resources of this vast continent, to people its recesses with active life, and to disturb the silence of its solitudes with the hum of industry. It comes to carry out the designs of the Creator, a predestinated agent to work His will and take its allotted part in the great drama enacting on this new stage of human destiny. Let Europe, then, pour out her population upon us if she will. There is room for all. Room in the primeval forest, on the boundless prairie, on farm and in workshop. Room in the school-house, where the children of ignorance may be qualified for the duties and objects of life, preparing for future usefulness by a process of regeneration that shall atone for the neglect and degradation of the past. Withhold not from others the privileges we possess. They come as our fathers came. Grudge them not a portion of this ample inheritance,

which is for all the sons and daughters of God who need a home.

If the highest agriculture of Europe, the combined result of scientific investigation, and the necessity which urges to the most economical uses, joined to cheapness of labor, is acknowledged to be deficient, what can be said of our modes of management.

One of the principal causes of our backwardness, is the disproportion of the size of our farms to the nutriment and labor we bestow upon them. The chief longing of the New England farmer is for land. No matter what may, already, be the number of his acres, or how unfaithfully tilled, he wants more. The adjoining field must be his ; he has set his heart upon it, and it is evident nature herself designed it for him, it is so very handy. He does not perceive the validity of a similar argument, used by its present possessor, who also has an inclination to enlarge his territory, but is of opinion that the fence between them is a proper limit to his neighbor, though not intended to deter *him* from acquiring a title-deed beyond it. He is like the Frenchman, who insisted that the Pyrenees were made, not to prevent the French from entering Spain, but to keep the Spaniards out of France.

The carelessness of our husbandry is usually in direct ratio to the quantity of land attempted to be cultivated. We have yet to learn, that a few acres, well cared for, will yield more than many merely travelled over ; and that a concentration of operative power, and the riches of the barn-yard, is better than to wear out the legs of the laborer before his hands can be employed, or to apportion manure in such homœopathic doses, that the languid and distressed earth must fall back on faith and a good constitution before she can rally from such a cruel course of malpractice. The old story of the vine-dresser and his

two daughters illustrates this. He gave one-third of his vineyard to one, when she married, and yet the remainder yielded as much as before. He gave another third to the second, on a similar occasion, but the portion he kept supplied him with as many grapes as the whole had done ; from the simple fact, that it received all the attention he had formerly bestowed on the undivided estate.

Another cause, operating against the farm, is the supposed superior respectability and emolument of other pursuits, acting as a continual drain on our agricultural population. The young man, toiling in homespun, sighs for the joys of broadcloth and fine linen ; and his visions of earthly bliss bring before him, not the green fields, with trees, and flowers, and the singing of birds, and the murmur of bees, and running brooks, and all the beautiful sights and sounds of his daily life ; but his imagination dwells on paved streets, and brick walls, and muddy streams of gutters, amid the rattle and din where men herd and jostle one another. His beau ideal of life is to pass it in a dingy office, where the blessed sun never enters ; to " achieve greatness " in the foul air of a court room ; to feel a consciousness of importance and patronage where humble greetings, and the lowly reverence of obsequious money dealers, tell who is noted on " Change." He thinks of the opulent city, and numbers up those whose ability or wealth has built them up a name, and originated many a fable for country circulation, stirring up young ambition to shake off, not the dust of the farm only, but the shoes themselves ; to jump from caterpillar to butterfly, without any intervening chrysalis ; to enter into that state of beatitude which erects a standard of gentility on the disdained or forgotten occupations of early life.

This desire to get rid of farm work should not exist among the young men of an agricultural people ; and,

yet, it would be uncharitable to keep them all at home when the cities cannot live without them. It is the fresh activity of the country that feeds the healthy growth and vigor of the town, and the most distinguished instances of success in professional, mercantile, or mechanical life may be traced back to the farm. The raw boy, who, to-day, makes his first acquaintance with the crowded street, in every body's way, as he stares with dazzled eyes and open mouth at the shop windows and the moving wonders about him, will in a few years be found, one of the conscript fathers of the city ; a leader among the able and enterprising, a founder of public charities, a benefactor to the poor, a man of great heart and open hand, mighty in the money market, yet not unmindful that he began with nothing, and ready to assist and encourage those who are starting on the same capital. Go to the luxurious mansion of this successful man, when he shall have attained the full zenith of prosperity. Ask him, as he is surrounded by every thing that is supposed to make existence desirable, on what portion of his eventful life he looks back with most satisfaction. Will he dwell on commercial gains, on professional eminence, on political honors ? Oh, no ! He will turn coldly from these aims of his uneasy life, back to the time when he knew nothing of the busy world before him, and he will glow with pride as he honestly boasts of his former skill with the scythe, or of the rods of stone wall he assisted to lay on his father's farm. He will tell you, that often, as he has struggled in the hard battle of life, when disappointment, which comes to all, has visited him, and he has been weighed down by a sense of the worthlessness of the prize, which has been the object of his exertions, the happy spot, where he once played and worked, has arisen before him to rebuke him with the peace he abandoned. He will say, how he has hoped to have, one day, some

quiet spot where the evening of life could glide tranquilly on amidst the repose and beauty of nature; how he has longed to live again among the holy things of his early days, which have had an influence on the better part of his life. He will tell how his sleep has been tinged with recollections of the past, dreaming over his boy time once more; hearing the song of birds, as it used to come in the twilight through the windows, mingled with the breath of the honeysuckle, and feeling again the south wind play in the raven locks of his childhood.

Society has its retributions. The wheel of fortune revolves full circle. The descendants of the thrifty man, not goaded by the necessity that urged him on, squander his fortune more rapidly than he accumulated it, dwindle into insignificance, and die out in two or three generations. The name of their progenitor fades away, and again the country boy comes, to keep up the vitality of the town, to run his race and be heard of no more forever.

The love of rural occupations has probably been lessened by the increased intercourse with more artificial employments. It is sometimes, perhaps ungallantly, intimated—that railroads and omnibusses have diminished that undivided attention to the dairy, which was the pride and glory of our grandmothers; that the ease and rapidity with which country is exchanged for town, cause sudden and frequent transitions from the churn and cheese press to the variety store and confectioner's shop. Calumny has even gone so far as to insinuate, that the operations of the old homestead are considered unmentionable things; and that the farmer's daughter is not presumed to know more about the making of butter, than her exquisite brother, from the counter, does of a potato row; the one fearing it may not be "genteel" to acknowledge acquaintance with a milk pail, and the other

thinking, poor fellow! that there is more respectability in a yard stick than in a hoe handle.

There are obstacles to excellence in Massachusetts agriculture independent of any moral agency of the farmer, and against which he can only oppose discretion and continual watchfulness. Our climate barely allows sufficient space between seed time and harvest. Our northern winter lays his cold hand upon the earth, and it is locked in such deep sleep that the vernal sun can scarcely waken it. We bound from snow to scorching heat, having summer upon us while we are yet expecting spring. Work, in all its variety, is crowded into a period so limited, that one thing presses on another with discouraging rapidity. Our rough soil, though requiring to be coaxed by all the appliances our resources can muster, before it can be prevailed upon to start a potato or push up a blade of corn, yet manifests an amazing alacrity in producing weeds; as though that were its legitimate occupation and it took pride in doing it well. At last, when, by perpetual entreaty and unremitted warfare, the right things grow, and the useless are relieved from immediate duty, there "comes a frost, a killing frost," like a straggler from the rear guard of a retreating army, taking a last shot. Then arrive caterpillar, canker and cut-worm, bugs "too numerous to mention," every genus and species that can crawl or fly, amateurs of various tastes, but uniform appetite, hastening to appropriate whatever portion of the banquet may best suit each particular palate, as though the sole object of planting was to set a table for their special accommodation. As regards these numerous families of visitors, which appear yearly to increase, the only alternative left may be suggested by quoting the brief, but comprehensive and very intelligible address of a Colonel to his regiment

when leading it into action. "There's the enemy. If you don't kill them, they'll kill you."

It is believed that these devastators augment in numbers as the birds diminish, and that it would be well to have patience with the latter in cherry time, and let them pick even more than their fair share, in consideration of the good service they render us. On the score of prudence, it may be questioned whether it is not equally economical to lose part of the fruit, as to endanger the whole tree by grafting lead into every limb. Hostility is declared against birds of such tameness and confidence that they build their nests on the boughs which overhang our houses, make their home in our gardens, and seem to claim from man companionship and protection. Persecution, which directed against them, looks very much like civil war or family quarrel, does not destroy their trusting nature. They cannot be driven from human society, but return with the spring to the old familiar places, appealing to our kindness and forbearance. An agricultural writer,* to whom Massachusetts is much indebted, once intimated that a young child would not be quite safe with a man who could shoot these gentle creatures. He, doubtless, felt such an act to be a violation of the sacred duty of hospitality, a desecration of the hearth-stone which assimilated it to murder. There are beautiful superstitions all over the world, which most effectually protect certain birds. They are sometimes founded on utility, but more frequently on a generous feeling growing from accustomed association. They are more powerful than law, for they enlist the sympathy of all and create a rule of government which is too popular to be broken. Would that our household friends had

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* The late Henry Coleman.

such a shield ; relying for security, not on the statutes, but the clemency of men.

However far we may fall below excellence in our farming, we have certainly reason to congratulate ourselves on the advance that has been made. Besides the more solid advantages, such as adaptation of manures to soils, rotation of suitable crops, draining and reclaiming land, which turn impassable swamps, covered with bushes, into ornamental and fruitful fields, there has been that attention to outward appearance which indicates taste, system, order, and an appreciation of the beautiful, which is a valuable auxiliary to well-regulated judgment. There is an improvement in rural architecture, a care for the comfort of animals, some solicitude about planting trees and repairing fences, and a laudable desire to do well and look well has become general. We have found out that it is as easy and as economical, to erect a habitation with some pretension to elegance, as to disfigure the side of the highway with a pine box, an ugly lump of clapboards and shingles. We begin to think it is not profitable, or becoming, to allow the worm to spin his web in our apple trees till the orchard looks like the ruins of a wasting conflagration. The practice is growing less frequent of suffering our cattle to carry about them a proportion of the barn yard, solidly caked on for a winter overcoat, while, in regard to such remnant of the hide as is visible, a course of exposure and low diet, like the tale that Hamlet's father could have told, causes "each particular hair to stand on end." It has also been discovered, that however appropriate the fur of the beaver may be for the head, it has a marked incongruity when protruding through a broken window. This peculiarity to our landscape might once have elicited some expression of surprise at the unusual number of hatters' shops, were

it not corrected by the conviction, that no sane mechanic would ever exhibit such specimens of his handicraft. On the whole, we have arrived at the rather reasonable conclusion—that trees, like other things, require some attention after being planted,—that cleanliness is about as essential to animals as good food,—and that the fashion of glazing with old hats goes out with the rum bottle.

We sometimes, perhaps, rather verge on the Utopian in our relations with some of our domestic friends. The hog is, occasionally, astonished by an application of soap-suds and a scrubbing-brush, particularly when he is a candidate for Society premiums; and the horse is beginning to shave as his master leaves off.

Agriculture is subject to periodical revivals. It is not exempted from the government of novelty. One thing after another has its day, is followed with hot haste until it is run to death, or a halloo in a different direction turns the chase. The most eager pursuit is often found to have been after something that is not worth catching. We have put the farm upon allowance, tantalizing the hungry soil with infinitessimal applications of guano and poudrette. We have gone through the fevers of ruta baga and mangel wurzel, and mourned over the transitory elysium of morus multicaulis. We have had fancy sheep till they thinned off by a complication of diseases; every breed of swine, from the one to be fattened on nothing to that whose ravenous appetite only confirmed an hereditary leanness. We have run on cows of all sorts and sizes — long horns, short horns, and no horns at all. Credulousness has been taxed to its fullest extent, in the recounted wonders of these constellations of the milky way; but it is gratifying to settle down in the belief that the present stock must be excellent, when, at this very moment, so many individuals are in happy possession of

that universal and ubiquitous animal—"the best cow in the State."

It might be hazardous, before an audience which, perhaps, contains distinguished members of Fowl Conventions, to allude, irreverently, to the mighty movement that has been agitating roost and hen-coop, causing grave deliberations on the properties of the gallinaceous family, from the strutting bantam, to that rather doubtfully-balanced production, whose praises are sounded on a scale proportioned to his power of dining off a flour-barrel; a discreet silence being observed as to his capabilities of finishing its contents.

There are bodily maladies which are the common lot of humanity, but which rarely make a second visitation. There are rural experiences, through which it seems necessary to pass sooner or later. They sometimes leave rough marks, but the patient is not often in danger of a relapse, and may find consolation in the reflection, that, like the measles and whooping-cough, they will not, probably, come twice.

The eccentric wanderings, to which the farmer is liable, are often interesting episodes in his ordinary pursuit, which not only amuse while they last, but lead to permanent improvement. Experiments, apparently useless, have originated uncounted blessings to our race. The occult labors of the alchemist produced a science which enrols the agencies of the elements into almost every practical occupation. The astrologer, reading the fate of men and nations in the stars, gave an impulse to knowledge, which will go on advancing till "time shall be no more." A child playing with a few pieces of glass, led to an invention by which the eye of man penetrates the wonders of the heavens, and increases our reverence for the Almighty, by unfolding the magnitude and harmony of His works.

Accident and experiment are the pioneers of progress. Failure is often the parent of exertion; perseverance does its work, and the glory comes at last.

Great enterprises have emerged from doubt and discouragement, and the benefactors of mankind have had to encounter the derision that mocks, and the friendly counsel that disheartens. Improvements, which mark an age, are often born in poverty and seclusion, friendless and unprotected, doomed to struggle against the obstacles which usually oppose new projects, until success silences criticism, and triumphs over sneering incredulity. Within our own times, how many things have arisen, and become familiar, which the wise called folly and the far-seeing pronounced impracticable. We have gas for our cities, steam for our highways, iron hands to clothe us, all manner of invented things to contribute to our wants or luxuries, almost without human aid. We send our lakes and rivers, in blocks like stone, to the tropics; upset old maxims, by compelling water to run up hill; and answer old skepticism by ticketing passengers through, by regular packets, to the "fabulous El Dorado." Puck, in putting "a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," is, decidedly, "a slow coach." He might brag in the time of Shakspeare, but would be distanced in these days. Our Ariel, who travels on wire, may talk of speed. We send him thousands of miles, and, before we can get out the change to pay the expenses of his journey, our order is executed and he is back to report progress. Yet all these things, and more, have passed through the fiery furnace of ridicule, coming out unscathed, and verifying the old proverb, "that he laughs best who laughs last."

The advance of our cultivation is often retarded by the indifference of the cultivator. There are to be found those who scoff at book-farming as useless, maintain that

there can be no improvement in the management of the soil, and look at a newly-invented implement as an insult to their ancestors. They would go on as the latter have done, not reflecting, that if successive generations did not add something to the stock of knowledge, we might get back to that patriarchal period when the broadest branched tree was the best house, and red paint the most fashionable garment; when the economy of the kitchen consisted in robbing the hoard of the squirrel, and the ten fingers were the only tools that scratched the face of mother earth.

A blind reverence for the past is the great stumbling-block of the present, and flagrant injustice to the future. Do as our fathers did! It is well we should, when we can do no better; but man has been made a progressive creature, is endowed with aspirations after excellence, has implanted in him a restless energy that is continually urging him onward. He could not stop if he would. He partakes of that law of motion which governs all things, from the smallest particle of animated dust, up to the infinite worlds which, cluster on cluster, system within system, whirl in endless revolution round the throne of God.

The fanatic, who threw a stone at the Earl of Rosse's telescope, because it pryed into mysteries, intended, as he believed, to be concealed from human curiosity, was a type of that conservatism which would have no new farming. It would not encourage the undutiful longings of children, who strive to know more than their parents. It would level the school-house, entertaining Jack Cade's opinion of men, "that usually talk of a noun and a verb and such abominable words." Of what use is education, but to engender self-conceit and encourage wasteful expenditure. Why buy volume on volume, and cover black-

boards with cabalistic characters, when "our forefathers had no other books but the score and the tally?"

Advancement is the destiny of man. He who stops in the race is run over, and left behind, crippled and forgotten. Whatever may be the limit to human attainment, it has not yet been discovered. We press forward to an eminence from which we hope to behold all created things, but it is reached only to find heights to be climbed and difficulties to be surmounted.

It is too generally supposed, that education should be confined to the "learned professions"— that it is well to fill the heads of lawyers, doctors, and clergymen; but as for the farmer, merchant, and mechanic, it is better that their drudgery should not be disturbed by any information beyond the rudiments. If the farmer can read the almanac and weekly newspaper, the merchant keep his accounts in tolerable condition, and the mechanic spell out the orders on his slate, they are presumed to be amply provided with all the erudition necessary for their vocations. The patronage of the State and the munificence of private individuals have been reserved to encourage a course of education, which had its origin in the wants of a privileged class of a bygone age, and is, now, of questionable use, even to those who intend to enter the pulpit, the sick chamber, or the courts of law. But, for the ordinary purposes of active life, the college student, when he is turned adrift with his diploma in his pocket, is about as helpless and useless an object as can be cast on the cold charities of the world. His nursing mother, after softly rocking his cradled slumber of four years' duration, suddenly shakes him off, in an unweaned state, thrusts him into the street, slams to and bolts the door, and there he stands, in hopeless dejection, wondering what to do with himself. "Necessity's sharp pinch"

arouses him. He finds that the speculations of philosophy do not yield an available income, nor can he feed on Greek roots. He discovers that the world is a very unclassical sort of a place, and requires an equivalent of more solidity than Latin verses, or the species of knowledge that can be applied to nothing. He begins to suspect that he must learn something useful; and he lays himself down to his new preparation, forgetting, with all possible celerity, the little he has acquired during his college life.

It is not my intention to undervalue classical education. There are scholarly men to whom it is as the breath of life, and who, in sustaining its refining influences, take that share in the well-being of society for which they are adapted by taste and temperament. But it is one thing to feel enthusiasm for the charm of ancient genius, and another to limp along through

"The drill'd dull lesson, forced down word by word."

All things are not intended for all men. The usual course of university education, excellent as it may be in some cases, is the exception, not the rule applicable to the necessities of this age and this country, which, in general, require sciences that can be applied to the useful arts, and knowledge that can be turned to account.

While learning has rarely called in vain for assistance, when its object has been to swell the already overcrowded ranks of what is generally understood by professional life, there has been little or nothing done to educate young men as farmers. The most important and the most honorable occupation, which is coëxtensive with civilization, which employs millions of men in daily labor, and on which the whole population of the globe depends for subsistence, has not a single institution devoted to it in all this broad land. It is left to help itself as it can, without Government protection, and with only such en-

couragement as can be derived from societies formed by farmers themselves. The exertions which have been made to establish an Agricultural school in this State, have not yet been successful, but it is to be hoped that they will be renewed and persisted in, until this great branch of industry shall receive the care and attention it demands. It is not supposed that an institution will turn out ready-made practical husbandmen to order, from the mere learning of books. There is no such intention or expectation. But it is believed that a course can be followed, which will combine theory with practice, and produce young men of intelligence and activity, whose hard hands and bronzed faces will bear honorable testimony that they have seen as much of the field as the study-room.

It was a saying of Napoleon, that "battles make soldiers." It is equally true, that hard work makes farmers. He who would "thrive by the plough," must leave his gloves with his Sunday coat. He must not expect to walk daintily over the earth, in holiday garb, and have her productions spring up in his footsteps. He who courts her favors, must go manfully to the work. She is not to be trifled with, and does not yield to coy wooing. The badges of her successful suitors are the dust of the ploughed ground, the sweat of the hay-field, the marks of honest industry wrought out in shirt sleeves. She loves the pressure of the cowhide boot, smiles on the tanned countenance, and the sinewy limbs, on which the insignia of manhood have been ingrained by the elements. But she does not look less winningly, if the calculating head, which guides the laboring hand, has drawn information from recorded wisdom, gathered hints from the periodical, interchanged opinions with fellow workers, and brought thought to bear on the great mystery of nature. Excellence in agriculture is neither the result of closet

study nor of assiduous labor. It can be effected only by a union of both. May the sagacity of Government consult the best interests of this people, by establishing the means of producing that as yet unknown prodigy, a perfect farmer.

Our lot is cast in an age of extraordinary activity. We dwell amid perpetual change. The wonder of yesterday is forgotten in the novelty of to-day, which to-morrow will be cast aside among the things that have been. We move with such rapidity, that we can hardly get acquainted with our native land. The tourist rushes through it on a railroad, alternating between ditches and sandbanks, now driving with headlong speed on the ridges of a precipice, and, anon, plunging into the recesses of the earth. Woods, fields, farms, villages, swarm, in an indistinct medley, before his bewildered vision. He looks on some smiling landscape, but before he can muster up a little sentiment, he is rattling over a bridge or rumbling through a tunnel. Now creation seems a flood of light, when the locomotive, that modern conjuror, yells out its unearthly incantation, and, *presto!* the scene changes, and he is whizzing amid the sepulchral damps of caverns, where sunshine can never come. The magnificence of nature, the wonders of art, the eternal works of God, and the passing marvels of man's invention and industry, are fused in his memory in one conglomerate mass,—and he calls this, seeing the country.

The man who returns to his own land, after a few years' absence, san scarcely find the places of his boyhood. The plough has passed over glade and woodland, and the wild haunts he loved to frequent are bustling with populous life. On the banks of the lovely stream, in whose peaceful seclusion he once found tranquillity, utility has erected her altars, and marshalled, in grim array, her

abominations of brick and mortar. The placid water, which knew no sound save in murmuring over its pebbly bed, has been turned into flume and raceway, and is doomed to groan on, in never-ending torture, insult being added to injury, in estimating its value by a calculation of horse power. Where the wild flower blossomed and the vine festooned the trees in beauty, the tavern sign creaks in the wind, the court-house and jail have been planted, and the lawyer's office has sprouted up in their shadow. The freshness and grace of nature have departed, and have left behind, the long crude street, stifled in dust and glaring with newness.

If there have ever been fairies in this country, their reign is over. They have forsaken a people who love the music of the spindle and loom, and think that the greensward can be used to more advantage than for dancing by moonlight. Verily, this is not their abiding-place; and the sentimental maiden, who watches in the dew for their coming, may find, instead of their tiny figures revelling in magic circle, the unromantic, mundane-looking doctor prescribing at her bedside.

The guardian genius, who presides over the New England cradle, is a very matter-of-fact, working day spirit. Should he embody himself to mortal sight, there would appear no ethereal being, wreathed with flowers, hovering between earth and heaven, but a burly, solid actuality; fixed on the firm ground, his hair filled with hay-seed or cotton, his throne a counting-house stool, his wand a shovel or hammer; decked, not in fairy green, but in stout frocking, or factory shirting rolled up at the elbows. There is nothing green about *him*.

Our Nation is yet in infancy. There are among us those who were present at her birth, and we have to reach back only a point in history to touch the first white

man who trod the shores of Massachusetts. Almost within our memories, the plough and the rifle went to the field together. The war-whoop startled the husbandman at his task, and his career was often stopped in mid furrow, as the humble home of his children curled up in fire. Nearly every village has its tradition of border war; and many a tale, more wondrous than imagination weaves into romance, is connected with the veteran and weather-beaten dwellings, which, here and there, are seen, amidst modern luxury and improvement, to remind us of the toils, and perils, and energy of our fathers.

There is, with us, no antiquity. *We* are among the first settlers and founders of empire, and are appointed to help work out the great problem, scarcely yet begun. Our ancestry is of yesterday; our posterity will stretch forward in that dim distance, which, like the infinity of space, eludes the grasp of human conception. We plan and toil, not for ourselves only, but for those who shall come after us. Our fields will be tilled, and their yellow burthen gathered by others. Strangers will fill our places and rejoice in the fruits of our labors, reaping where we have sown; but if our foresight and care shall give them a single comfort, or gratify a single want, it will be well that we have been here. The tree we set out by the roadside may bless our memory, though we know it not. Its slow growth may give little shelter to us, but, long after the hands which planted it are dust, the wayfarer will stop to rest in its shade, and the merry laugh of childhood will ring under its drooping branches.

Not here alone, on our rugged soil and in our hard climate, are to be felt the results of New England cultivation. Already are her children scattered over this boundless land. On the undulating immensity of the uninhabited West, by the ridges of the Rocky Mountains, on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and the banks of Sa-

cramento and Oregon, the smoke of their camp-fires stream like the banners of an invading host. The influences, to be extended over those distant regions, are originated here. They spring from church, and school-room, and fireside, to give the blessings of our homes to unnumbered millions. They lie around us in our daily walks, offering, at every step, the inspiration of nature. They call to us in the leafy woods, in the wavy and fitful light of the grain field, in the rippling brook, in the thousand flowers, in the mysterious night with her countless stars. Their genial effect on us will be felt in the vast solitudes destined to be peopled by descendants of the Pilgrims. The skill and habits, which are to give a character to society, and fashion into order the rude materials drawn together by the lure of gold, may receive a generous impulse from the example of a day like this.

The harvesting of the great reaper will soon garner us all; but the good we do will survive, and we shall not have lived in vain, if we leave behind, one solitary light to cheer the cause of humanity.